Scotland - Church of Scotland - General Assembly - Separate Transactions.

WARNING and ADMONITION to the PEOPLE of SCOTLAND, by the COMMISSION of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, met at Edinburgh, March 1. 1798.

THE Commiſſion of the General Aſſembly of the Church of Scotland, in conformity to the inſtructions which they received, "to advert to the intereſt of the Church upon every occaſion," have met at a ſeaſon which ſummons all the friends of every Civil and Religious Eſtabliſhment around their ſtandards; and while other orders of men, rouſed by the dangers which threaten their country, are making every exertion to diffuſe the public ſpirit which their own conduct diſplays, the Commiſſion judge it their indiſpenſable duty to iſſue this Warning and Admonition to the People under their charge in the different pariſhes of Scotland.

In the arduous conteſt in which we are at preſent engaged, we have not as yet met with any national diſaſter; but, while the other States of Europe, intimidated by the progreſs of the French arms, are bending under the yoke, we have hitherto been able to protect our commerce, and to ward off the hoſtilities which have been directed againſt our ſhores. While, Brethren, you celebrate the gallantry of our ſeamen, the vigilance and activity of our naval adminiſtration, the ſkill and alertneſs of our commanders; while you honour with daily expreſſions of your good will, the illuſtrious heroes who led to victory, and pay every tribute to the memory of the brave and faithful men who fell in the cauſe of their country;—amidſt the acknowledgments due to human exertions, look up to HIM whom the wind and the ſeas obey. Recollect the circumſtances which render the time and the meaſure of a naval victory completely dependent upon the will of Heaven. In the train of ſucceſs which has attended us round the globe, mark the continued interpoſition of Providence for our defence; and, after the example of the Noble Admirals who, in the preſence of their Sovereign, preſented upon the altar of God the Colours which have been won in the great naval engagements of this war, let all ranks of men unite in ſaying, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory."

The ſucceſſion of naval victories, which we truſt, Brethren, you recollect with pious gratitude, has filled our enemies with rage. They are indignant that there is one nation in Europe over which, in the unexampled career of their fortune, they have never gained any advantage, which has perſevered in oppoſing its influence to the wild progreſs of their ambition, and has had the magnanimity to extend its views to the independence of Europe, and the liberties of mankind. They are indignant that there is one free government which repudiates their falſe maxims; one eſtabliſhed conſtitution which expoſes the chimerical nature of their ſyſtem; one happy country, where the complete ſecurity, which the ſubject derives from the legal adminiſtration of juſtice, forms a ſtriking contraſt to the precarious tenure by which every man holds his life, his property, and his place in ſociety, under the unlimited deſpotiſm which has been engrafted upon their doctrines of liberty and equality. They have declared, that the French Republic and the Britiſh Government cannot ſubſiſt together. They are collecting on their coaſts a great army, which, with a view both to inſult and to intimidate us, they call "the Army of England;" and, having rejected the equitable terms which we offered, without propoſing in their turn any plan of pacification, they boaſt that they will ſend this army to dictate in London the terms upon which they will condeſcend to give us peace.

After theſe declarations of the enemy, the war is not on our part a matter of choice: It is a war which the firſt law of nature, the great duty of ſelf-preſervation, renders juſt and neceſſary: It is a war not for wealth, for diſtant poſſeſſions, for commercial advantages: It is a war in defence of all the bleſſings which we have received from heaven, in defence of the honour, the independence, the exiſtence of the nation. Imagine not, Brethren, that it is only a temporary interruption of your tranquillity which you have reaſon to dread. The enemies with whom you now contend come to ſeize your property, to lay waſte your lands, and to repay the armies which invade you with the ſpoil.—In the fury of their rapine, they will make no diſtinction; but the houſes of the peaſant and the landlord, of the farmer and the cottager, will be conſumed in one flame. They come to wreſt out of our hands the dominion of the ſea, to annihilate our commerce, to render us completely ſubject to their power, and to reduce Great Britain to the condition of Venice, which, after pretending to make free, they ſold to the Emperor; of Holland, which their friendſhip has ruined; of the combination of ſtates, called the Ciſalpine Republic, which hold a precarious exiſtence under the protection of a victorious French General. They wage war againſt your form of government; and, if they accompliſh their deſigns, you will be no longer a free

people.

people. Inſtead of that ſecurity which every man enjoys, by knowing that he cannot be condemned till his conduct has been fully inveſtigated, and the ſentence of a jury has pronounced him guilty, there will be ſubſtituted the mandates of a government, which, under the pretext of liberty, ſets no bounds to its deſpotiſm; which, without even the form of a trial, ſends the ſuſpected to public or to ſecret death, to priſon, or to baniſhment; which confiſcates their effects, and extends its perſecution to all their connections. Inſtead of a ſubordination of ranks, which we know to be the beſt guard of liberty, by which no man is excluded from riſing to riches and honour, and the different orders of the ſtate miniſter to the ſubſiſtence, the protection, and the enjoyments of one another, there will be an equality of wretchedneſs, in which the rich are ſtripped of their property; the poor, without being permitted to ſhare in the ſpoil, are deprived of their comforts; and all are alike ſubjected to arbitrary requiſition, to inſult, and oppreſſion. Your enemies come, Brethren, not only to dethrone your King, and to diſmiſs your Parliament, but they come to overthrow that religion which you and your fathers have profeſſed, and the free exerciſe of which is one of the rights of a Britiſh ſubject. They wage war againſt the Scriptures which you revere; againſt the God in whom you truſt. They have effaced from their kalendar that day upon which Chriſtians have, from the beginning, celebrated the reſurrection of the Lord Jeſus; and they are endeavouring to obliterate every memorial of the Chriſtian religion. All religious eſtabliſhment of every kind, all Chriſtian belief and worſhip, they ridicule and proſcribe. Were their impious threatnings to prevail, in thoſe churches where you are now met, you would aſſemble no more; the voice of your Paſtors would never again be heard there. Inſtead of the chearing, conſoling, elevating, doctrines of the Goſpel of Chriſt, there would be publicly inculcated in this land that gloomy degrading ſyſtem, which baniſhes mind from the univerſe, which declares that death is an eternal ſleep, and that, beyond the grave, there is no puniſhment to the wicked, no reward to the righteous, no recompenſe for the troubles of life. The ſound inſtruction of the Scriptures would yield to the deluſive doctrines of a falſe philoſophy, which ſhakes the ſecurity of government, deſtroys the innocence and tranquillity of private life, and gives licence to a multitude of crimes: And the dereliction of every religious principle would, in this country, be accompanied with the ſame brutality of rage, and the ſame flagitiouſneſs of conduct, which have appeared in the atrocious deeds that have marked the progreſs of the French revolution. Nor would it be in your power, Brethren, to fly, as many inhabitants of France have fled, from theſe horrors; for whither could you go? If this iſland become a province of France, there will be no longer an aſylum for the wretched, no other habitation of religion, truth, and juſtice; but one ſound of tumult and uproar will be heard around the globe.

We beſeech you, Brethren, ſeriouſly, to conſider the dangers, of which we have given you a faithful picture: And we earneſtly recommend it to all the Miniſters of this National Church, to endeavour, by public and private inſtruction, to impreſs your minds with a ſenſe of the duty which, in ſuch circumſtances, you owe to your Country; and to encourage people of all ranks to reſolve, like our King, and his two Houſes of Parliament, that they will ſtand or fall with our religion, our laws, and liberties. Is there a Briton whoſe heart will not accord with ſuch admonitions? Is this a time to contend about political differences, when we are ſtruggling for the very exiſtence of the nation? Shall ſpeculative improvements of the beſt conſtitution in the world, ſhall attachment to a party, or private diſſatisfaction, unnerve the Britiſh arm, and lay our ſide open to the dagger of the foe? We have ſeen, with much ſatisfaction, the voluntary aſſociations for the defence of the country, in which perſons of rank and property, mingling with merchants, manufacturers and mechanics, form a body of men trained to the uſe of arms, who, without forſaking the occupations of peace, are ready to repreſs internal tumult, and to guard our ſhores againſt the approach of the Foe. We behold, with equal delight, another expreſſion of the ſame patriotic ſpirit, in the alacrity with which money is furniſhed for the Public ſervice. While the Taxes that have been lately impoſed do not, in the ſmalleſt degree, affect the lower orders of the Community, thoſe who pay the largeſt ſhare of them are ſo far from complaining of the burden created by the demands of the State, that we ſee them preſſing forward to teſtify their zeal in the common cauſe, by the Voluntary Contribution of a large portion of their income. It is wiſe to think, that wealth cannot be ſo profitably expended as in preſerving all that renders exiſtence deſirable: It is virtuous to learn private frugality from the extent of the National expenditure: It is magnanimous to relinquiſh every paltry ſcheme of hoarding up ſuperfluities and ſavings when all is at ſtake, and to truſt, that every ſacrifice will be abundantly recompenſed by the gratitude of the Country, and a ſhare in the National proſperity. Let thoſe who are reſtrained by the narrowneſs of their income, or the demands of their families, from emu-

lating

lating the liberality of their brethren, be the more ſolicitous to exhibit every diſplay of public ſpirit which their ſituation admits. A ſeaſon of danger, of alarm, and national exertion, is a time when the laws ſhould reign ſupreme; when every man ſhould be found at his poſt, waiting in ſilence to receive the orders which may be given him, prompt in yielding obedience, and ready to lend to the Community all his talents and all his vigour. At ſuch a time, all who love their Country, forgetting former quarrels, ſhould, without recrimination, encourage one another under every hardſhip, and bear, without murmuring, every burden. Let every ſinner think, that he adds to the ſum of national guilt, and conſpires, in his place, to draw down the vengeance of Heaven upon the land which nouriſhes him. Let the frivolous manners, the languid, careleſs, ſelfiſh ſpirit, and that corruption of the whole character, which the continuance of peace and national proſperity tends to foſter, yield the place which they have uſurped in this Country, to thoſe manly virtues which the preſſure of the times demands. Maintain, Brethren, a ſacred regard to all the rights of your neighbours: Abandon every vicious purſuit; and concenter, in love to your Country, thoſe affections which, at other times, follow after vanity.—By this union of ſentiment and of effort, you will expoſe the falſehood of that inſidious diſtinction which our enemies affect to draw between the Government and the People of Britain; and you will exhibit to their view a nation whom their emiſſaries were not able to corrupt, whom their boaſting has not intimidated, and whom the hiſtory of their eventful Revolution is daily confirming in attachment to that unrivalled Conſtitution of which, with an envious eye, and an uſurping hand, they attempt to rob us.

Let a firm faith in the ſuperintending Providence of GOD, eſtabliſh your minds, Brethren, in perfect tranquillity with regard to the iſſue of the preſent conteſt. To reſiſt the rude attack of the ſpoiler, to ſet bounds to lawleſs ambition, and to prolong the reign of Order and Juſtice, is a duty which GOD hath impoſed, a ſervice which accords with the whole plan of HIS righteous Adminiſtration, a work which HE approves, and which HE will bleſs. The combination of HIS enemies cannot ſhake the pillars of HIS everlaſting throne. The Church of Chriſt is founded upon a "Rock, againſt which "the gates of hell ſhall not prevail;" and, notwithſtanding the aſſertions and efforts of infidelity, the public eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity ſhall continue to be the barrier erected by the GOD of Truth againſt the return of idolatry and ſuperſtition. "HE that is higher than the higheſt re-"gardeth, and there be higher than they."—"HE beholdeth miſchief and ſpite to requite them "with HIS hand."—"HE hath bent HIS bow;" and when HIS time is come, "HE will make "ready HIS arrows upon the ſtrings," and "will find out them that hate HIM." By continuing our ſucceſſes at ſea, HE may ſtill turn the battle from our gates: Or, if HE has deſtined, that upon our own land we are to contend, whether Great Britain ſhall retain its rank amongſt the nations of the earth, or become an appendage of the French Republic, he may employ the confuſion and deſtruction which await the invader as an inſtrument of accelerating the return of peace. Be not afraid, Brethren, of the threats of the foe: But "ſanctify the LORD of Hoſts himſelf, and "let HIM be your fear, and let HIM be your dread." Recollect the glorious ſtruggle by which your Anceſtors purchaſed the bleſſings of a Free Government; and, proving yourſelves worthy of the precious inheritance which they have tranſmitted to you, truſt in that Arm which made them ſtrong. "Remember the LORD which is great and terrible; and fight for your brethren, "your ſons and your daughters, your wives and your houſes." Set up your banners in HIS name, and HE will ſpread over you HIS impenetrable ſhield. "The right hand of the LORD, which "doth valiantly," ſhall again overthrow thoſe who riſe up againſt you; and your children's children ſhall, in this land, worſhip the GOD of their fathers. Amen.

The above Warning and Admonition having been read and fully conſidered, was unanimouſly approved by the Commiſſion of the General Aſſembly of the Church of Scotland; and they appoint the ſame to be forthwith printed, and copies thereof ſent to all the Miniſters of this Church; who are hereby appointed to read the ſame from their reſpective pulpits, on Thurſday next, the 8th of this preſent month, the day appointed for a National Faſt; or on the firſt Lord's day after it comes to their hands. Subſcribed by

WILLIAM GREENFIELD, Moderator.
ANDREW DALZEL, Clk.